

**ABSTRACT**

High loft, low density nonwoven webs suitable for use in a variety of applications requiring strong fabric layers are produced by forming substantially continuous, spunbond, crimped, bicomponent fibers of crimpable, e.g., side by side or eccentric sheath/core 5 (A/B) configuration which are unheated prior to collection. The fibers are then heated and cooled in the absence of impeding forces to achieve maximum crimp in the Z-direction and produce a web of lofted material of greater uniformity than attained with comparable material whose fibers are drawn by a heated process. The resultant nonwoven material can then be pattern bonded or laminated for additional strength without interfering with the desired loft of 10 the low density nonwoven. The additionally strengthened nonwoven may then be further processed such as by lamination or the like to further increase its utility.